The B.B.C.
Abuses its Monopoly.

BY

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By Lt.-Col. L. Merson Davies, M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc., F.G.S., F.R.S.E., and Douglas Dewar, B.A., F.Z.S.

In the autumn of 1942 the B.B.C. announced in the "Radio Times" of September 25th (p. 4) and in their Pamphlet "Talks to Discuss: September to December 1942" (pp. 10 to 16) a series of 12 broadcasts entitled "Man's Place in Nature" to be given on successive Fridays from October 2nd to December 18th. According to the announcements the object of these talks was to tell listeners how man himself and his surroundings came into being, how they are related to each other, and how man can best plan his future in the light of this knowledge. The announcement emphasised that in the talks clear distinction would be made between what we actually know as fact and what is merely "guess-work"; and an understanding was to be arrived at regarding "the nature of scientific proof." Incidentally, on p. 2 of the pamphlet, a talk was announced for October 12th, to discuss "Freedom of Speech," and explain "why Anglo-Saxon countries have always held this freedom to be basic." All was, in fact, to be thoroughly reliable, accurate and open to examination.

The talks, however, as we heard them and as published in the "Listener," were far from conforming to these ideals. We take no exception to what some of the speakers said, and object only to occasional statements by others, but we strongly object to the talks of the principal speaker, Prof. D. M. S. Watson, F.R.S., who gave seven of the talks and part of the eighth. He spoke as a zoologist and geologist and so dealt with our branches of research. We are therefore in a position to assert that many of his statements were grossly inaccurate. No attempt was made to explain "The nature of scientific proof" or to distinguish between facts and "guess-work": on the contrary what we know to be sheer guess-work and flat contradictions of actual facts were continually given out in a manner so dogmatic as to cause many listeners to accept such guesses as scientific truths.

We therefore, in the interest of the public and that "free speech" to which the B.B.C. rendered such lip service, sent the following letter of protest to the Talks Director, challenging these misstatements, and requesting to be allowed to put the true facts before the public :

"As scientific workers, knowing the real facts, we wish to protest emphatically against the misleading statements put forward by your speakers in the series entitled "Man's Place in Nature."

One expects fellow scientists, however enthusiastic, to avoid deliberate misrepresentation. Yet some of these speakers have not done so. We regard the following as deliberate:

1. Misstatements :

Assertion that no early Cambrian form of life resembles any modern one. (Listener, pp. 492, 557—the latter despite the protest on p. 535).

Assertion that complete fossil ancestral series have been found for many animals (p. 557, etc.) though not one can be shown to exist for any animal, even the limited series for the horse being notoriously questionable.

Representation of Piltdown man as the oldest known human fossil (p. 621, etc.) and of the Swanscombe fragment as the only trace of modern man prior even to Neanderthal (p. 622), despite good evidence for regarding many remains of modern type as older than any degraded type.

Assertion that nature is found to be "planless" (pp. 591, 621), which assumes that blind factors like Natural Selection are proved to have produced the intricate structures found in the organic world—which is not the case, as Professor Watson well knows. (This is apart from evidences of design in inorganic nature, as noted by Sir Ambrose Fleming and others, of which your speakers are probably ignorant).

2. **Questionable Theories presented as Proved Facts :**

Uranium time measurements quoted as unchaliengeable (p. 492)—although radically uncertain, as shown by Sir Ambrose Fleming.

Slow evolution quoted as provcd fact (pp. 526, 557, 622, etc.) although contrary to all evidence and flatly denicd by many evolutionists themscives.

Evolution of Amphibia from Fishes, Rcptiles from Amphibia, Mammals and Birds from Reptiles cited as proved (pp. 557, 558, 591, etc.) although every one is radically challsngeable.

3. **Suppression of Facts :**

Complete ignoring of demonstrable facts regarding the sudden appearances, in high specialisation from the first, of ALL the main Phyla (with exception of Vertebrata) from the base of the Cambrian; and of ALL THE MOST STRIKING subsequent appearances of new types, e.g., the first Ichthyosaurs, Pterodactyls, Chelonians, Birds, Bats, Whales, etc.—a notorious fact admitted by all responsible authorities.

Complete ignoring of radical admissions by prominent evolutionists themselves of the impossibility of actually proving evolution and the utter inadequacy of structural homologies and fossil successions (the only kinds of evidence claimed by your speakers) to disprove literal creation.

Complete ignoring of the fact that the difficulties presented by structural specialisations and succession anomalies, etc., have driven many students of the subject—Botanists, Zoologists, Geologists—to make radical attacks upon all theories of transformism, and some even to throw over their own long-standing belief in evolution as a whole.

We recall the fact that Professor Watson himself, when addressing the Zoological Section of the British Association on the subject of "Adaptation," concluded a review of proposed explanations of evolution by saying

"we do not know how this evolution has been brought about"

(Rep. Brit. Ass. Adv. Sci., 1929, p. 99)

and expressly added that we could not determine "which, if any, of the proposed explanations is a vera causa". That clearly admits the purely presumptive nature of Darwin's explanation per Natural and Sexual Selections, which cannot be shown to have any operative value. In the same address, Professor Watson also repeatedly admitted that:

"Evolution itself is accepted by zoologists not because it has been observed to occur or . . . can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible" (Ibid., pp.88,95).

These facts show how indefensible are Professor Watson's present efforts to convince other people—to whom special creation is not "clearly incredible"—that Darwin has shown nature to be "planless", and that evolution can be proved.

We also recall that these talks were heralded by an introduction (Listener p. 424) stating that their purpose was "to try to arrive at some understanding of the nature of scientific proof; for only—or at least mainly—by scientific investigation of the past and present can man assure himself that his plans for the future are well laid", and the whole series was "specially designed for the ordinary listener whose scientific knowledge is not great". Deliberately to put before such listeners propositions which the principal speaker himself flatly contradicted before a scientific audience, seems quite unjustifiable. Only the clearest scientific evidence—instead of sheer presumption—could justify inviting the public to lay plans for the future on the understanding that all nature is fortuitous, and that Natural and Sexual Selections (alias Blood and Lust) have converted reptiles into men and may raise them still further.

We therefore, as scientists, knowing the actual facts as to structural problems and fossil successions, and by no means regarding nature as planless or special creation as incredible, challenge Professor Watson to prove his case by producing evidence capable of establishing it, instead of making transparently false and dogmatic assertions.

We hold that the public—especially that section of it which objects to the propagation of "science, falsely so-called"—is entitled to be told

the other side of this question. It seems reasonable to claim on their behalf, after they have been subjected to these 12 talks arranged by Professor Watson (not to mention the picturesque fables entitled "How Things Began" which have been put before schoolchildren every Tuesday morning for some time past) that we, who know the counter facts which they would like to hear, and are entitled to hear, should either:

1. Be allowed to give at least ONE talk, to quote the facts we know; or
2. Be allowed to present two of our number to meet, in open debate, Professor Watson and any colleague he likes to bring—perhaps Professor Julian Huxley would consent to support him;—the subject of the debate to be "Evolution: Pro and Con", or any equivalent title that may be preferred. Let the public see how these men fare when faced on equal terms by research workers before whom it will be folly to make false claims.

If no such justice is done to the public—or that section of the public which desires to know how facts actually stand—we will feel compelled, on their behalf, to make the facts regarding this request, and its treatment by you, known as widely as possible.

Trusting that we will not have to regard you as capable of so misusing your powers as to deny us—or rather, that section of the public with whom we sympathise—this simple and obvious reparation, we remain

L. M. DAVIES. D. DEWAR."

In reply to the above letter, which was despatched by Dewar, and to one later sent by Davies enclosing some letters in support of our request for a talk or a debate, the following letter, dated 11th. January, was received from Mr. G. R. Barnes, Director of Talks, B.B.C. addressed to Davies:

"Your letter of the 29th December and other related correspondence has been sent to me, and I have been in touch with Professor D.M.S. Watson about Mr. Dewar's letter of 15th December.

The series "Man's Place in Nature" was intended to give listeners evidence which science has provided of the place occupied by man in his natural habitat. The B.B.C. took the best advice regarding the choice of speakers and are satisfied that those eventually chosen were of the highest scientific repute. We regret that you cannot accept the scientific evidence adduced by Professor Watson or the deductions he drew from it. We do not however feel that this in itself imposes on the B.B.C. the obligation to afford facilities for the expression of contrary views.

G. R. BARNES,
Director of Talks."

To the above letter Davies and Dewar sent the following rejoinder dated January 19th 1943:

"We find it difficult to believe that your letter 04/HT/GRB of 11-1-43 is based on a decision of the authority in control of the B.B.C. If it be, we request that authority to reconsider its decision: otherwise we beg you to be so good as to place the correspondence before that authority.

You write; "We regret that you cannot accept the scientific evidence adduced by Professor Watson or the deductions he drew from it. We do not however feel that this in itself imposes on the B.B.C. the obligation to afford facilities for the expression of contrary views."

If the first part of the above statment were correct it would mean that the B.B.C. has taken sides in a scientific dispute in giving publicity to the views of one side and denying this to the other.

But this part of the statement incorrectly asserts that we cannot accept scientific evidence adduced by Professor Watson. We welcome and accept scientific evidence. Our objection is plainly set forth in our letter of 15-12-42, viz., it is to Professor Watson's misrepresentation of the evidence, suppression of facts and putting forth mere theories as proved facts. We have cited concrete examples. To put it bluntly, our charge is that the B.B.C. by broadcasting Prof. Watson's talks, bas deceived the public. This is a serious matter unless the deception be unintentional or unless it can be shown that our charge is unfounded.

Clearly the B.B.C. is in honour bound to refute our charges or to take steps to undeceive the public. As our charges are well-founded, Professor Watson has not attempted to meet them either in the "Listener" or in a private letter—the first alternative is not open to the B.B.C.

There remains the second alternative. There are two ways of undeceiving the public: (a) Prof. Watson openly admitting that his zeal has led him to make misstatements and mistakes, and to modify or withdraw the former and to inform the public that some men of science do not share his views, or (b) The B.B.C. granting our request for a talk or a debate. The arranging of a debate is likely to prove difficult because biologists who accept evolution do so as a matter of faith or of inclination, and know well that they would fare ill in a debate because of the many facts against the doctrine.

In view of the above it would seem that the B.B.C., in order to save its reputation, will have to allow the talk we ask for. We hope to hear from you in a few days that arrangements will be made for this talk at an early date.

We enclose a batch of letters supporting our request. More will follow.

L. M. DAVIES. D. DEWAR."

In reply to the above, Davies received from Robert Foot, Joint Director General, B.B.C., the following letter dated February 2nd, 1943:

"We have carefully considered the correspondence ending with your letter of January 19th, and regret that we do not see our way to accepting the suggestion which you make for a further talk or discussion on the subjects dealt with in the recently concluded series "Man's Place in Nature."

As stated in Mr. Barnes' letter of January 11th, we took the advice of recognised authorities in planning this series and in selecting the speakers. We naturally realise that the views expressed by them may not be universally acceptable, but feel sure that the general public would not have the special knowledge required to appreciate the points raised in your letter of December 15th, while broadcasting is admittedly an unsuitable medium for scientific controversy.

As regards the postscript to your letter, referring to the Schools series "How Things Began," the point to which you call our attention had been made clear in a previous broadcast, but in case other listeners had gained a wrong impression, the point has again been stressed in a subsequent broadcast."

The "postscript" mentioned in the last paragraph of this letter refers to remarks by Col. Davies in a covering note forwarding the joint letter of January 19th. In this postscript he said:

"I have just been listening to "Uncle Jim's" broadcast representing Neanderthal man with Mousterian culture as a "near man," preceding as well as leading to the first true men. This is gross misrepresentation of the facts. Even Keith admits—and stresses—the abundant evidence for the existence of true men long before the Mousterian period. Not a hint of this does your spokesman give to defenceless children, whose minds are impressed with false ideas at an age when incapable of examining matters for themselves."

The distortion was, indeed, most deliberate. The children were categorically told—and made to repeat—that first came "ape men," then "near men" and lastly "true men." All the stressing was deliberately aimed at creating the very thing which Mr. Foot trics lightly to dismiss as a wrong impression. As we never heard the contrary "made clear," it is probable that others did not—which indicates the irrecoverable mischief which can be done by irresponsible broadcasting.

In reply to the above letter Davies and Dewar sent the following letter, dated February 20th, 1943, to Mr. Robert Foot, Joint Director-General, B.B.C.:

"We have received your letter of the 2nd instant, and much regret your decision not to allow us to broadcast corrections of the misstatements made by Professor D. M. S. Watson in the series entitled "Man's Place in Nature."

We cannot be satisfied with your professed reason for refusing our request, namely, that "the general public would not have the special

knowledge required to appreciate the points raised" in our letter of December 15th. Such a plea is clearly untenable, because:

(1) You admit the point we raised regarding a misstatement made by "Uncle Jim" when addressing schoolchildren did require correction. Yet this point was essentially similar to those we raised regarding misstatements made by Professor Watson when addressing adults. If children of ten to fourteen years of age could appreciate the significance of "True Men" being older than "Near Men," why should adults not appreciate the significance of "True Men" being older even than "Ape Men"? Do you think that children are more intelligent than adults?

(2) You totally ignore the fact that, among other certificates we sent you, were signed declarations by leaders of the principal Christian denominations in Scotland, to the effect that, owing to the importance of the issues involved, it was incumbent upon the B.B.C. to allow us to present the facts on the other side. Do senior Churchmen not know the intellectual capacity of the general public?

(3) It is, indeed, obvious that if people could understand the assertions which were made for their supposed enlightenment by Professor Watson, and published to that end in the Listener, they could equally understand our contradictions of those assertions. Thus if they could understand Watson's statement (Listener, 1942, p. 492) that "the oldest fossils we know are quite unlike any animals now living," they could obviously understand our reply: "Watson is wrong. The earliest known land-living forms include scorpions, which are so like modern ones that it takes an expert to see any difference between them. One of the earliest known marine fossils is the lamp-shell Lingula, which still lives in the sea. One of the earliest known fossils of animals that lived in water on the land is the water-flea Estheria which still frequents saline springs in deserts." If your listeners could understand Watson's assertion (Listener p. 622) that "the earliest remains of man are in fact very much more ape-like than all their successors," they could equally understand our retort: "This is not so. The earliest known human skulls are no more ape-like than the skulls of men living today." What is more, the whole theory of ape descent has been challenged time and again by experts. Professor Wood Jones declares that "man is a more primitive mammal than are the monkeys and apes, and . . . may be looked on as their ancestor" (Problem of Man's Ancestry, 1918, p. 39)—which is Watson's idea reversed. Professor H. F. Osborn insists that: "The entire monkey-ape theory of human descent is a fiction which has been entirely set aside by modern anatomical research" (New York Times, July 12th, 1925). Dr. Austin H. Clark wrote: "There is not the slightest evidence that man is descended from an ape" (Zoogenesis. The New Evolution, 1931). Professor M. Westenhofer writes: "I am more and more convinced that the Darwin-Haeckel theory of the ascent of man cannot be supported any longer" (Research and Progress, Vol. 3, 1937, p. 92). Dr. H. N. Woollard, F.R.S., writes. "recent man has a vast antiquity, in fact greater than any extinct variety" (Science Progress, Vol 33, 1938, p. 23). What man or child could fail to understand these statements?

(4) It is also obvious that anybody, child or adult, could understand the bald fact that Professor Watson himself, when addressing scientists, admitted that evolution could not be proved. That one fact invalidates all his present claims.

It therefore seems clear that the reason given for refusing our request is untenable. We take the liberty of suggesting a more probable reason, namely, that the facts we could quote on the other side are so drastic that their publication might arouse indignation against the B.B.C. for having broadcast the talks to which we object.

We note in this connection, from the first paragraph of the Talks Director's letter of January 11th, that Professor Watson was informed

of the challenge contained in our letter of December 15th, and preferred not to accept it.

We also note that Professor Watson's final talk, given on December 18th, was not published in the Listener. Since all the previous eleven talks of this series were published, we can only suppose that the arrival of our letter of December 15th, challenging his previous published statements, decided the Talks Director to withhold publication of the last and most dogmatic of all Professor Watson's broadcasts.

In short, it seems clear that the B.B.C. are refusing justice to the public, whom they now know to have been misinformed on matters of grave moment to all Christians. For even those Christians who accept belief in evolution regard it as God-directed, but it was repeatedly asserted in these talks that nature is now known to be "planless." This is utterly contrary to fact, for the whole of nature inorganic as well as organic is packed with evidences of design. The efforts of materialists to account for these on naturalistic lines break down at all crucial points. To have allowed most misleading statements to be given out, and then to refuse us permission to broadcast anything on the other side, constitutes a gross misuse of the monopoly of the air granted to you by the Postmaster General.

L. M. DAVIES and D. DEWAR."

The above correspondence reveals a most unsatisfactory state of affairs. But it is not the whole story. Recent broadcast talks to Schools, under the title "How Things Began," have been even more objectionable than the series "Man's Place in Nature," intended for adults. Our correspondence with the B.B.C. made little reference to the School Talks because, as they were not published in the Listener, it was more difficult to frame charges in regard to them. Some of our objections might have been met with the rejoinder that we had not heard correctly what was said. We had, therefore, to confine our main criticisms to those statements which were printed as well as broadcast, which meant dealing with only part of the evil.

What is more. At the end of their pamphlet advertising the Schools Talks entitled "How Things Began," the B.B.C. listed 28 books which they recommended teachers to study in order to supplement the Talks. Of these 28 books at least 11 are by adherents of the Rational Press Association or by those whose books have been published by Watts and Co., who are in close association, if not identical, with the Rationalist Press Association. Against 7 of the 28 books recommended an asterisk is placed, marking them as "specially useful books"; 4 of the 7 are included in the above 11.

The inevitably evil results of such use of its monopoly by the B.B.C. needs no stressing. In times like the present, when rapidly increasing crime and immorality are alarming our Judges and Bishops—as the daily papers testify—the B.B.C. appear to be directly strengthening the forces of evil by instilling materialistic ideas into the rising generation at a very impressionable age, by indefensible presentations of "Science falsely so-called."

The above remarks do not apply to the natural history talks given in the Children's hour by "Zoo Man" which, unlike those of "Uncle Jim" to the Schools, breathe the true spirit of science.

Among those who have written letters addressed to the B.B.C. supporting our protest are: The Council of the Victoria Institute, the Council of the Bible Testimony Fellowship, the President and Editor of the British Bible Union, and a number of biologists, medical and other scientific men, well-known authors, University professors, heads of Training Colleges, and dignitaries of the Anglican, Free, Roman and Scottish Churches.